

Director of Central Intelligence



Special National Intelligence Estimate

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The Fragmentation of Portuguese Politics and the Presidential Election

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THE FRAGMENTATION OF PORTUGUESE POLITICS AND THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Information available as of 16 January 1986 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, which was approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board on that date.

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organization of the Department of State.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

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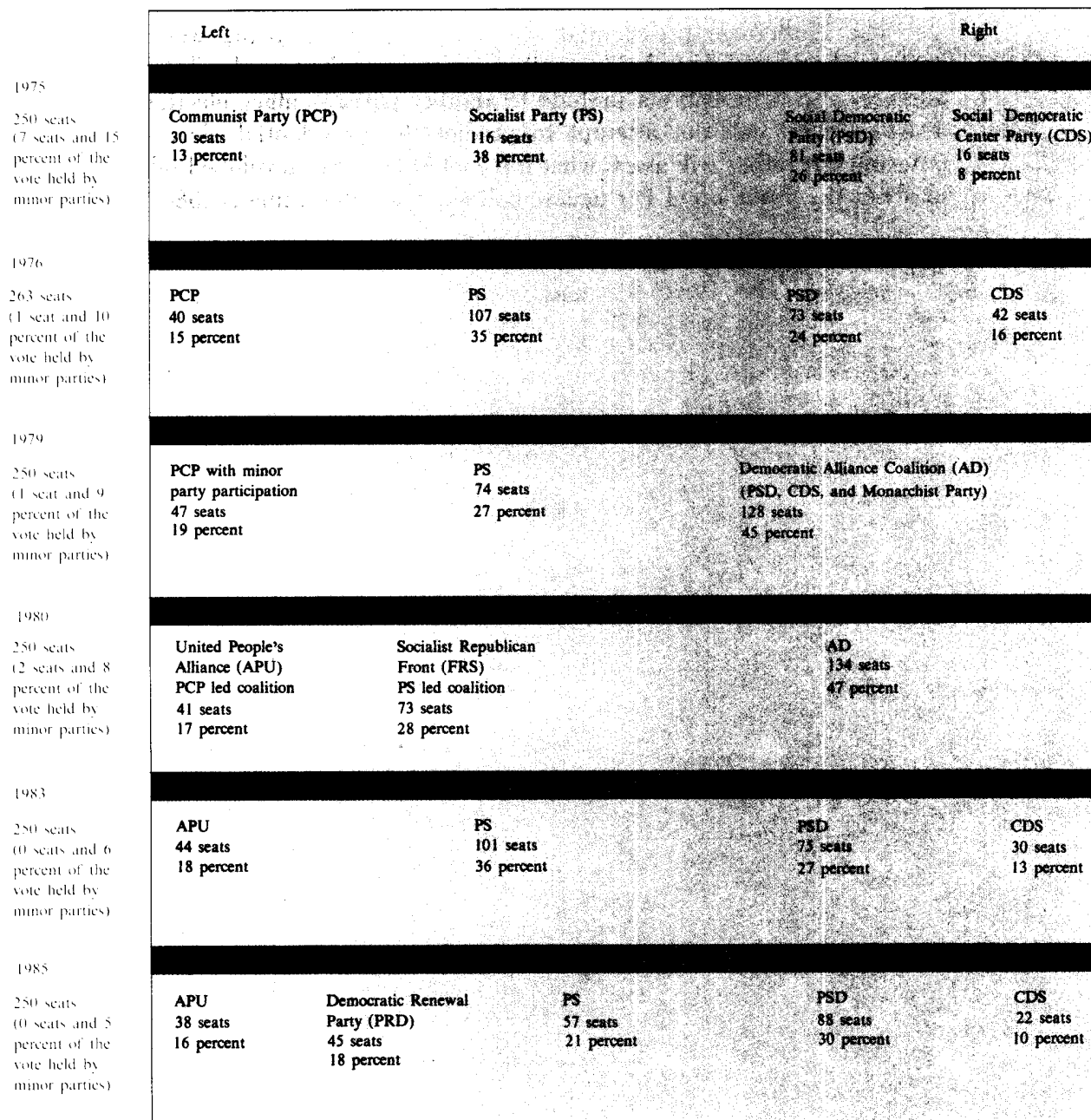
SCOPE NOTE

The Portuguese presidential election campaign is being waged against a background of clashing political agendas and unusual political alliances and is probably a prelude to another parliamentary election. This Estimate will not attempt to predict the presidential election outcome but rather will assess what the contest as it has developed tells us about the evolution of Portuguese politics. The time frame is 1986.

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Figure 1
Election Results, 1975-85



Note: The diagram illustrates shifts in support for the major parties in the Portuguese parliamentary elections. An individual party's share of each bar corresponds to its relative share of the national vote vis-a-vis the other major parties.

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DISCUSSION

1. The presidential election is crystallizing recent trends toward a fragmentation of Portuguese politics and toward a less cooperative relationship with the United States. Moreover, a victory by either of the two leftist candidates—former Socialist Salgado Zenha or Third World-oriented Maria Lourdes Pintasilgo—would increase Communist influence, although not to the extent of making them a dominant political force. Even if centrist Socialist leader Mario Soares or onetime conservative chieftain and current election favorite Diogo Freitas do Amaral—both fundamentally pro-West—won, there would probably be a continuation, albeit at a slower pace, of the shift from an American-oriented diplomacy to a more independent and European-oriented approach.¹

The Stakes in the Presidential Election

2. The first round of the presidential election will occur on 26 January, and a second round, if necessary, will take place within three weeks afterward. The President enjoys considerable prestige and influence, particularly if he has widespread popular support, but does not possess sweeping powers. The

¹ The Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes the tone of this Estimate exaggerates the threat the presidential election poses for domestic stability and Portugal's relationship with the United States, yet correctly concludes in its penultimate sentence that Portugal will remain a firm member of the Alliance regardless who wins the election. The formation of a party representing the interests of outgoing President Eanes does not significantly further fragment Portuguese politics; rather it reflects some of the longstanding cleavages that have already complicated parliamentary coalition formation. The so-called trend toward a less cooperative relationship is as much a natural result of entry into the EC as due to internal politics. Portugal will more closely adhere in the future to agreed Community positions—which on occasion place the entire Community at odds with US policy—but, nevertheless, will likely remain one of our most cooperative European allies. While INR recognizes that the likely defeat of Soares—one of the most supportive of allied leaders—would diminish his influence, it is likely that the Socialists would still incline more toward participation in a centrist parliamentary coalition than to join an arrangement that would enhance Communist strength. An unlikely victory by Zenha or Pintasilgo could increase Communist influence, but the party is likely to remain only marginally influential during the time frame of the Estimate.

Constitution makes the President responsible for appointing prime ministers, dissolving governments, and calling parliamentary elections. But he must take public opinion and parliamentary arithmetic into account in exercising those functions. The Prime Minister is charged with formulating and executing national policy. Similarly, the President is commander in chief of the armed forces, but the Defense Minister exercises effective day-to-day control over the military and has the major say in appointments.

3. The political stakes in this particular presidential race are nonetheless considerable. The outgoing President, Antonio Ramalho Eanes, is constitutionally prohibited from running for a third consecutive term. To perpetuate his political career, he encouraged the formation of the Democratic Renewal Party (PRD), which is positioned between the Communists and Socialists, and has now enticed former Socialist Zenha to be its presidential candidate. The 6 October 1985 parliamentary election established the PRD as a fifth major party, saw the triumph of new Social Democratic Party (PSD) leader Cavaco Silva's bid for a sharper left-right split, allowed Silva to form a minority right-of-center government led by his PSD, and dealt a major defeat to Soares and his formula for a centrist government anchored around his Socialist Party (see figure 1). Overall, this result further fragments Portuguese politics, a process, which, if continued, would create the opportunity for greater Communist influence. The presidential election is not only the continuation of these political battles but also a fight for political survival by Soares, who has now led the Socialists to defeats not only in the parliamentary, but also in the communal elections held on 15 December 1985.

4. Whoever wins will likely be a key player in the next parliamentary election. This election is almost certain to take place by the end of the year because the current minority government is only tolerated by its opponents as an interim measure pending clarification of voter sentiments in the presidential election and a subsequent regrouping of forces.

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The Outlook and Political Implications

5. The unreliability of Portuguese opinion polls makes the election result difficult to predict. Freitas, however, is the clear front-runner and could even win outright in the first round. The three left-of-center candidates are competing to get into the second round. That contest will depend in large part on whether Eanes is able to transfer some of his popularity to the rather colorless Zenha and whether the usually disciplined Communist electorate follows the promptings of party leaders to vote for Zenha rather than their own apparently widespread sentiment to vote for Pintasilgo. Another question hanging over Zenha's campaign—and one that would loom big in his presidency should he win—is the state of his health. Some observers believe his lackluster performance so far has been partly caused by illness. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Should either Zenha or Pintasilgo make it to the second round, they would be a formidable challenge to Freitas. Soares's prospects, in turn, hinge in large part on whether Zenha and Pintasilgo split the rest of the left-of-center vote evenly enough for him to be able to use his core Socialist backing to edge them both out. Portuguese voters also hold Soares responsible for the IMF-imposed austerity program and the concomitant economic hardships. Although he might make it to the second round, Soares would be highly unlikely to win against Freitas as Zenha and Pintasilgo's supporters would probably vote against him or abstain. [REDACTED]

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6. *Zenha* is the candidate of the inchoate PRD and is running on a moderate left-of-center platform. The Communists are backing him on the calculation that his victory would hurt the Socialists and open new possibilities for them. Zenha realizes he needs their votes and organization to win, and Eanes himself has declared many times that democratic politicians should engage the Communists in "dialogue" to wean them away from obstructionist tactics. Eanes and Zenha, however, played a major role in thwarting the attempted Communist takeover in 1974-75 and remain basically anti-Communist. Overall, we believe the PRD might be willing at some point to take office on the basis of informal, behind-the-scenes understanding with the Communists, and Zenha as president would probably countenance such a deal. But Eanes would remain an influential factor and continue to be reluctant to authorize any formal pact with the Communists as long as they retain their Stalinist outlook, which they give every sign of doing. [REDACTED]

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7. *Pintasilgo* would actually have a more unsettling and unpredictable impact than Zenha on Portuguese politics. She defines herself as a Catholic leftist and is campaigning on Third World, ecological, and antipolitical themes—a blend reminiscent of the Greens in West Germany. Unlike Zenha, however, Pintasilgo is neither an experienced politician nor a clear thinker. As president, she might be more vulnerable than either Zenha or Eanes to Communist manipulation. [REDACTED]

8. The victory of *Freitas* would strengthen the pro-Western center-right but could also reinforce the trend toward polarization in Portuguese politics. As president, he would be overtly anti-Communist and would cooperate in Cavaco Silva's efforts to forge a durable parliamentary majority centered around his PSD. Cavaco Silva's method, however, is to weaken the Socialist Party and to polarize the democratic parties into broad right and left blocs. This could create a situation in which the Communists could increase their influence because neither the democratic left parties—the PRD and the Socialists—nor the center-right parties—the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats—were capable of achieving a parliamentary majority on their own. [REDACTED]

9. A victory by *Soares* would be as great a personal triumph as it would be unexpected. It would vindicate the centrist course he has charted, bolster the Socialists' position in the middle of the political spectrum, and help check the recent polarization in Portuguese politics. But it would not re-create the parliamentary majority under which he ruled Portugal between 1983 and 1985. [REDACTED]

10. Regardless of who becomes president, the next year or so will be a time of considerable political fluidity. Cavaco Silva would have particular trouble hanging onto office for long if one of the leftist candidates beat out PSD-backed Freitas. Indeed, a setback in the presidential race could even revive doubts within the PSD about Cavaco Silva's bipolar strategy and encourage centrist-oriented proponents of cooperation with the Socialists to challenge him for the party leadership. Similarly, a Soares or Freitas victory would be no less a blow to Eanes and the PRD and would make it harder for that party to consolidate its new position as a major player on the democratic left. Conversely, a Soares defeat—especially in the first round—might produce a leftward lurch by the Socialists followed by some individual defections to the PSD. [REDACTED]

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11. The uncertain political situation makes it unlikely that a consensus will develop to deal with the country's serious economic and social problems. It has also unsettled Armed Forces Chief of Staff Jose Lemos

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Ferreira and some other military leaders who are concerned that a Pintasilgo or Zenha victory would bring about a sharp lurch to the left. The military, however, accept their subordination to civilian authority, and there is no evidence of any inclination on the part of either soldiers or civilians to engineer a military challenge to the government. [REDACTED]

Implications for the United States

12. In the coming period of great maneuvering, none of the Portuguese politicians will want to appear to be as forthcoming to us as Soares was. Politicians of virtually every stripe are critical of his alleged sacrifice of Portuguese interests to Washington and what they see as active US support for him in the past. For the United States, this is likely to mean more contention over nuclear, transit, access, and other issues. Even if Soares beat the odds and became President, he would no longer have the direct impact on Portuguese diplomacy that he has had as Prime Minister and principal shaper of Socialist foreign policy views. Portugal's accession to the EC on 1 January is also likely to reinforce the shift in Portuguese diplomacy from its American-oriented thrust of the past several decades to a more independent and European approach. [REDACTED]

13. Eanes—even out of office—is likely to retain an influence on Lisbon's foreign policy. As leader of the PRD, he would continue to support Portugal's partner-

ship in Western security arrangements, but would probably become even more outspoken in emphasizing the rebuilding of ties to Angola, Mozambique, and the other former African territories. Eanes's influence would increase further if one of the two leftist candidates—particularly Zenha—won the presidency. Although Zenha has not spelled out in detail his foreign policy views, he appears to share Eanes's general outlook and would probably work with him to give Portuguese diplomacy a more independent accent. Pintasilgo, on the other hand, would likely be the least reliable partner for the West. She has not articulated a clear foreign policy, but she sympathizes with at least some of the tenets of the liberation theology propounded by some Catholic leftists. And her influence as president would almost certainly give Portuguese diplomacy a more "Third World" coloration. [REDACTED]

14. Despite this general trend toward greater Portuguese nationalism, the Portuguese in general and most non-Communist politicians support good relations with Washington. Portugal will therefore almost certainly remain a firm member of the Western Alliance regardless of who wins the presidency. But both domestic and diplomatic trends will make it a more demanding US ally. [REDACTED]

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